



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

NEW JERSEY TASK FORCE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT
10TH ANNUAL REPORT
PROCEEDINGS AND FINDINGS FOR THE PERIOD OF JULY 2019 - JUNE 2020



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*Resigned from the NJTFCAN in 2019

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INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect (NJTFCAN) is a statutorily established, multidisciplinary citizen review panel to support New Jersey's child welfare system. The NJTFCAN also serves as New Jersey's Children's Justice Act (CJA) designated entity, authorizing it to receive and administer CJA funds.

The purpose of the NJTFCAN, in accordance with the statute, is to study and develop recommendations regarding the most effective means of improving the quality and scope of child protective and preventative services provided or supported by State government. This includes a review of the practices and policies used by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P), and the Division of Family and Community Partnerships (FCP), in the Department of Children and Families (DCF), in order to:

- optimize coordination of child abuse related services and investigations;
- promote the safety of children at risk of abuse or neglect;
- ensure a timely determination with regard to reports of alleged child abuse;
- educate the public about the problems of, and coordinate activities relating to, child abuse and neglect;
- develop a statewide plan to prevent child abuse and neglect and mechanisms to facilitate child abuse and neglect prevention strategies in coordination with the FCP;
- mobilize citizens and community agencies in a proactive effort to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect;
- foster cooperative working relationships between state and local agencies responsible for providing services to victims of child abuse and neglect and their families; and
- serve as one of DCF's federally mandated Citizen Review Panels.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION & TREATMENT ACT

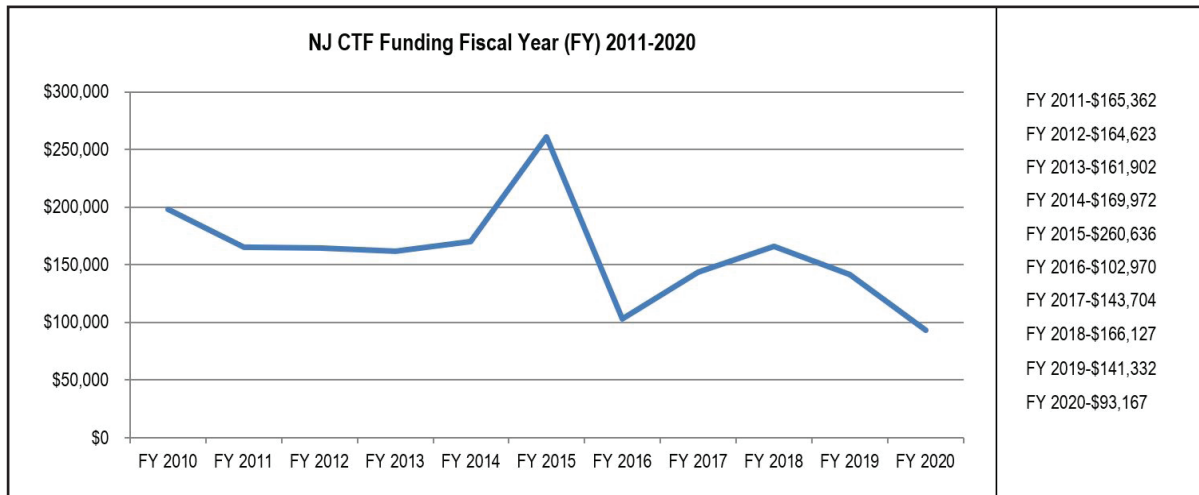
The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) provides CJA grants that are used to develop programs to reform state systems and improve New Jersey's response to cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and suspected cases of child abuse and neglect fatalities.

CJA funds are also used to establish and support programs to improve New Jersey's child protection system in a manner that limits additional trauma to child victims of abuse and neglect. In accordance with the NJTFCAN's Three-Year Assessment for 2018 to 2021, model programs and innovative approaches were implemented to improve the identification, investigation, and prosecution of child abuse and neglect, as well as enhance the effectiveness of the judicial process.

NEW JERSEY CHILDREN’S TRUST FUND

The New Jersey Children’s Trust Fund (NJ CTF) is a private/public partnership created by law in 1985 to fund child abuse and neglect prevention programs in New Jersey communities. NJ CTF receives funds primarily from donations made by residents via a check box on New Jersey income tax forms. Private donors also make contributions. Any portion of the money actually appropriated which are remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall lapse to the Children’s Trust Fund. These re-appropriated funds, along with the actual collections for the fiscal year, comprise the funding that supports the contracts being funded with the NJ CTF collections.

The NJ CTF supports local child abuse and neglect prevention programs that implement evidence-based and evidence-informed programs. Below are NJ CTF’s collections from 2011 - 2020:



NJTFCAN established that the programs and initiatives funded by the 2019 - 2020 NJ CTF funding cycle:

- Supported the strategic goals and objectives of the Statewide Prevention Plan, “Supporting Strong Families and Communities: Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect, 2014 - 2017” as well as the 2018-2021 Prevention Action Plan
- Reflected the Standards of Prevention: Strengthening Families through Family Support.

In 2019 - 2020, NJ CTF was involved with the following projects:

- New Jersey Children's Trust Fund Marketing Campaign - The Communication Committee of the NJTFCAN developed a multi-faceted, multi-modal campaign, leveraging several opportunities to engage NJ residents, corporate partners, the retail sales community and DCF staff in elevating the CTF. The campaign includes social media advertising, Point-of-Sale fundraising, corporate giving, and a DCF staff store, wherein 5% of the proceeds will go to the CTF. The Committee believes that this campaign is an iterative, planful way to expand awareness and participation in the NJ CTF.

- Predict, Align, Prevent - In July 2018, the NJTFCAN approved use of CTF funds to support primary prevention in NJ through a partnership with Predict, Align, Prevent, a Texas-based non-profit organization dedicated to preventing child abuse and neglect by leveraging data on social determinants of abuse and neglect. By using geospatial predictive risk modeling, DCF will be able to identify high-risk places where child maltreatment and related fatalities are likely to occur in the future. Once these high-risk areas are identified, prevention resources will be mobilized precisely to where they will do the most good. As a result, there should be a reduction in child abuse and neglect-related deaths, and contributory risk factors.
- Collaborative Safety - Designed to establish a culture of safety while simultaneously transforming the critical incident review system using contemporary safety science and a nationally recognized model, the Collaborative Safety model supports the agency to develop a robust and proactive response to critical incidents and a responsive system dedicated to learning and improvement. It uses an approach that moves away from a culture of blame and towards a culture of responsibility. Years of research have shown that blame may decrease accountability, as it inhibits the ability of the organization to learn and improve.

NJTFCAN PROCEEDINGS

Bimonthly meetings provide NJTFCAN with the opportunity to discuss and assess items associated with its statutorily mandated work. Three committees support NJTFCAN's work: Protection, Prevention and Communication. One subcommittee, the Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee (SORS), meets bimonthly and reports the results of its activities to NJTFCAN. There are approximately 80 individuals that contribute to this important work.

To view a copy of meeting minutes, [visit http://nj.gov/dcf/providers/boards/njtfcan/](http://nj.gov/dcf/providers/boards/njtfcan/).

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES 2019 - 2020

The NJTFCAN held 3 meetings between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020. The NJTFCAN was provided with a presentation by Mary Coogan of Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) regarding the Regional Forums that were held by ACNJ and DCF to discuss the implementation of the Federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). The Task Force was also provided a presentation by Patty Mojta of Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey regarding the Prevention Committee's WE CAN Campaign. The WE CAN campaign is a federal initiative that uses popular social media platforms to distribute prevention messages.

In March 2020, the attention of the Task Force turned to the COVID-19 pandemic. A majority of the conversations held were related to updates regarding the response to the pandemic by not only the NJ DCF, but that of the other state departments and community agencies. The Adolescents in Transition Workgroup, formed in 2019, continued to meet to discuss the priorities of their work.

Each year, NJTFCAN sponsors multidisciplinary training programs to improve the handling of cases of child abuse and neglect. All NJTFCAN-sponsored professional training programs are child-focused and designed to promote skills that prevent additional trauma to children and their families.

CJA funds were used to support the following professional development projects to enhance the knowledge of persons involved in the investigation, prosecution, assessment, and treatment of child abuse and neglect:

1. Finding Words

New Jersey: Forensic Interviewing & Preparing Children for Court This project trains frontline professionals involved in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse to conduct effective and legally defensible interviews of alleged child sexual abuse victims of various ages and to prepare children for court. The child-focused forensic interviewing project continues to reform the investigation and prosecution process and improve civil and criminal court proceedings.

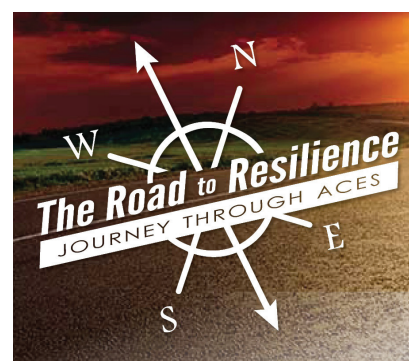
**TO DATE, OVER
2,000 PROFESSIONALS
INVOLVED IN
INVESTIGATING CHILD
SEXUAL ABUSE HAVE
BEEN TRAINED IN
FINDING WORDS - NJ**

2. Conferences

The Road to Resilience: Journey Through ACEs

NJTFCAN, in collaboration with DCF, and with the logistical assistance of Stockton University, hosted a statewide conference for approximately 600 professionals in the field of child welfare on Friday, September 13, 2019 at the centrally located Westin Princeton at Forrestal Village in Princeton, NJ entitled, “*The Road to Resilience: Journey Through ACEs*”. This interdisciplinary conference provided professionals and advocates working with children and families an opportunity to learn from experts in child welfare/protection issues and disciplines serving children and families. The speakers for this event included national and local experts on the topic of ACEs, resiliency and healing-centered care, including Laura Porter, co-founder of ACE Interface, who discussed brain science and the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences, Amelia Franck Meyer, CEO of Alia Innovations, discussed trauma-informed, healing-centered practices and Pat Stanislaski, Director of Partnering for Prevention, who presented on resilience. This conference represented the continuum of work regarding ACEs.

NJTFCAN 2019 Biennial Conference



September 13, 2019
Princeton, New Jersey

Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Training – CJA funds are also provided to the MDT Coordinators’ Association for training to improve case management of the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases referred to the prosecutor’s office. Unfortunately, due to the impact of COVID-19, the MDT training for 2020 has been postponed until 2021.

NJTFCAN RECOMMENDATIONS TO DCF

The New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect recommends that DCF continues its work in understanding and addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Research on the subject of ACEs shows that individuals who experience high levels of adversity early in life are more likely to see a lasting impact from that adversity, including long-term health issues, substance abuse issues, mental health challenges, financial instability, homelessness, and more. The lasting impact from ACEs can erode protective factors in an individual's adult relationships, thus perpetuating the cyclical nature of adversity and maltreatment.

The NJTFCAN also recommends that DCF continues its efforts to implement a trauma-informed lens over the work that they do. Recognizing and addressing the root cause of trauma rather than simply remedying the outward projections of trauma are more effective in creating a stable environment in which to facilitate healing and relief. Ultimately, by shifting DCF's work to a trauma-informed, evidence-based, healing-centered approach, that considers diversity, equity, and inclusion, New Jersey can minimize the impact from ACEs in its population and improve outcomes for families throughout the Garden State. The Task Force also recommends continued focus on prevention services to address relational and emotional wellness and reduction of adverse childhood experiences from the earliest moments of family life.

WORK OF THE NJTFCAN COMMITTEES

Prevention Committee

The Prevention Committee, with expertise in, and a commitment to, family support and the prevention of all forms of child maltreatment, coordinates the efforts of stakeholders. It is the Prevention Committee's responsibility to ensure the development and implementation of a meaningful and effective Statewide Prevention Plan. The Committee held four meetings between July 2019 and June 2020. Three of these meetings were in-person (July, September, and March) and the final meeting in June was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the past year, the Prevention Committee continued to work toward the goals established in the 2018 – 2021 NJ Statewide Prevention Plan. These are:

Outreach and Engagement

- To increase coordination across infant, child, youth, and family-service systems and supports;
- To develop non-traditional partnerships to assist with primary prevention efforts.

Evidence-Based/Evidence Informed Programs and Best Practices

- To advocate for evidence-based programs at each level of prevention; encouraging programs that are not evidence-based to, at minimum, collect quality data and follow research-based guidelines and standards to evaluate effectiveness; and
- To promote workforce access to training, coaching, and ongoing support to better align services with the Prevention Standards.

Infrastructure and Resources

- To develop creative and sustainable strategies to increase funding for prevention programs that strengthen families and communities.
- To review and evaluate CTF and DCF funding/spending and prevention program outcomes to determine where increases could occur, based on successful program outcomes.

Communication

- To work with system partners to develop key primary prevention messages;
- To develop and implement diverse strategies for communication of prevention messages to families and partners.

Accomplishments

The Communication Workgroup worked with NJ DCF and The National Child Abuse and Neglect Technical Assistance and Strategic Dissemination Center (CANTASD), a service of the Children's Bureau, on a NJ implementation of the WE CAN Campaign. The WE CAN campaign is a federal initiative that pushes out prevention messages using the popular social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter. WE CAN stands for Work to End Child Abuse and Neglect. The campaign has more than 160 messages with corresponding images already formatted for social media. The workgroup worked with CANTASD to create a state-specific Adaptation Toolkit. As a result NJ was the first state to initiate a statewide campaign for the April 2020 Child Abuse and Neglect month. The NJ campaign included links to state and local resources.

Moving Forward

The state of NJ, including our prevention community, has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, a statewide budget crisis, and the current movement for racial justice. In response to the changing environment, the Prevention Committee has begun to review our priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. The Committee has reviewed the CDC's Technical Package for Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect, and cross-walked the CDC recommendations with NJ's current system of policies and services. The Committee has also begun to identify areas for focus in the next Prevention Plan which will be developed by 2022, as well as determine how to build on the progress in implementing the current Prevention Plan.

Protection Committee

The Protection Committee is comprised of members of NJTFCAN and allied members in the child maltreatment field. The members analyze state laws, policy, and case practice, within and outside New Jersey. The goal of the committee is to coordinate the efforts of stakeholders as well as advance new methods to address child maltreatment. During the previous year, the main areas of focus included the issue of Internet safety and juveniles with inappropriate sexual behaviors. The following represents the work of the Protection Committee and its workgroups:

Workgroups

Digital Realm of Child Abuse Workgroup

In January 2018, the Digital Realm of Child Abuse Workgroup surveyed public school districts in New Jersey regarding available programming to students and parents on the topics of child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, and internet safety. Upon reviewing the compiled data, which contained survey responses from schools across all 21 counties, several data points were identified as potential areas for growth. At the time the survey was conducted, less than half of all respondents reported having curricula or programming within their school for students and/or parents. Furthermore, approximately 40% of respondents who had programming, reported that their program did not have a parent component.

The workgroup continues to focus on providing relevant information and resources to assist with parent education in this topic area. Other data points the group aims to evaluate further include variances in programming among different grade bands (e.g., early elementary, late elementary, middle/intermediate, and high school) as well as differences within the different geographic/regional areas of the state (e.g., north, central, and south). The workgroup has developed a list of recommendations to be provided to the NJ Department of Education in the upcoming months.

Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors Workgroup

The Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors Workgroup was created to discuss and improve the procedures for handling criminal cases in the family courts regarding juveniles with sexually based offenses. The work group has discussed lack of clinical services in the State, with the resulting disparity in how juveniles are served. It was recommended that a clinician training program, similar to the one previously provided by the Juvenile Justice Committee be initiated. It was further recommended that clinicians partner with survivor organizations to develop a protocol for assessing juveniles for diversionary programs.

Although the previous Chair of the workgroup has since left the Committee, the efforts of the workgroup continue with a revitalization of membership and the addition of a new leader. The workgroup plans to discuss how child on child sexual contact is referred, investigated and serviced in an effort to bring this type of case into focus going forward.

Communication Committee

The mission of the Communication Committee is to increase awareness and promote social change related to child abuse and neglect and its prevention and intervention. It is also tasked with raising awareness of NJTFCAN's activities and issues.

During 2019-20, the Committee fulfilled this mission by working with the DCF Office of Communications and Public Affairs on a CTF Marketing Campaign. The marketing campaign includes the following initiatives:

- **Social Media Advertising** – To raise awareness and direct donors for credit card online donation portal. A social media campaign manager will optimize reach to the various social media sites during a focused timeframe.
- **Point-of-Sale Fundraising** – Coordinate CTF fundraisers utilizing retailers that may have assisted DCF programs in the past or retailers that are new to working with DCF and may be interested in supporting the DCF mission.
- **Corporate Giving** – With a letter drafted by the co-chairs of the NJTFCAN, reaching out for corporate assistance in the elevation of CTF and the strengthening of families across the state.
- **DCF Logo Shop** – Overseeing the development of a DCF “Logo Shop,” marketed exclusively to DCF employees to build morale, team spirit, and raise funds for the CTF. The DCF Logo Shop will leverage print-on-demand vendors to produce materials and direct a portion of all sales – a minimum of 5% - to the CTF.

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)

The charge of the Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS) is outlined in the NJTFCAN statute and includes the following:

- Reviewing staffing levels of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P);
- Developing recommendations regarding staffing levels;
- Developing recommendations around the most effective methods of recruiting, hiring, and retaining staff within the Division;
- Reviewing the Division's performance in the achievement of management and client outcomes; and
- Reporting annually the Subcommittee's findings to the Governor and Legislature.

SORS attended to this charge by implementing and analyzing its staff survey as well as receiving comprehensive updates from DCF executive staff. SORS convened five times in 2019-2020, focusing on the following areas agreed upon in the previous work plan.

2019 – 2020 Priorities of the SORS

- Resource Family Pilot
- Services and resource availability to staff
- DCF Strategic Plan/CSOC integration
- DCF Child and Family Services Plan
- DCF Office of Training and Professional Development
- DCF Office of Staff Health and Wellness

For the Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee Annual Report, please visit:
https://nj.gov/dcf/news/reportsnewsletters/taskforce/njtfca_reports.html

TASK FORCE COMMITTEES/SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Note: All members listed, status of membership, job titles, and organization affiliations are as of June 30, 2018.

Prevention Committee

Patty Mojta, Chair

Sanford Starr, Vice Chair

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Director

NJ Department of Human Services

Division of Family Development

*Niurca Louis

Vice President of Prevention Services

Robins Nest, Inc.

*Christine Baker, Ph.D.

Clinical Director

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*Maureen Braun-Scalera, MSW, LCSW

Director

Rutgers University School of Social Work

Institute for Families

Office of Child Welfare Initiatives

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NJ Department of Human Services

Division of Family Development

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Executive Director

PEI Kids

Diane Dellanno, LCSW

Policy Analyst

Advocates for Children of New Jersey

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Division Director of Prevention Programs

Prevent Child Abuse-NJ

Aldina M. Hovde

Director, Safety & Trauma Informed Care Initiatives

NJ Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Cheryl Mojta

Director of Operations

Child Assault Prevention Program

Patty Mojta

Director of Adolescent Programs

Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey

Kathleen Roe

Executive Director

Parents Inc.

Rush Russell

Executive Director

Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey

Svetlana Shpiegel, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, MSW Program Director

Department of Social Work and Child

Advocacy

Montclair State University

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Office of Substance Abuse Programming
& Addiction Services
Department of Corrections

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Foster and Adoptive Family Services

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Tiffany Tucker, MD
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Advocare Pediatrics

Nicole Epps
Managing Director, Programs & Policy
World Childhood Foundation

**resigned from the Committee in 2019-20*

Protection Committee Membership

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Liza Kirschenbaum, Vice-Chair

Richard Stagliano
President and CEO
Center for Family Services

Liza Kirschenbaum, Esq.
Associate Director
Court Appointed Special Advocates of
New Jersey

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Department of Children and Families
Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit

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FN-CSA, SANE-A, SANE-P
SART, FNE Coordinator
Gloucester County Prosecutor Office

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Executive Director
180 Turning Lives Around, Inc.
Esther M. East
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Center of Clifton/Passaic

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New Jersey Welfare Training Partnership

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**resigned from the Committee in 2019-20*

Communication Committee Membership

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Cheryl Mojta, Co-Chair

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Office of Public Defender

Cheryl Mojta
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Matthew Schwartz
Youth Representative

Cristi Bruce
Learning Consultant

Lynn Patmalnee
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Roslyn Dashiell, MBA
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PEI Kids

Lesley Dixon
Montclair University

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Mary Coogan, Vice-Chair

Marygrace Billek, M.S.S.W.
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Mercer County Department of
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Division of Law and Public Safety

Lisa Chapland, Esq.
Kinship Resource Parent

Carmen Diaz-Petti, LCSW
Assistant Commissioner
Department of Children and Families
Division of Child Protection & Perma-
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Chief Executive Officer
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Vice President
Advocates for Children of NJ

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Somerset County
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Chief Counsel
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Matthew Schwartz
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Angie Waters
CASA Atlantic/Cape May

Robyn Veasey, Esq
Deputy Public Defender
Office of the Public Defender

Honorable Joseph Vitale
Senator, District 19
Designee: Stephanie Albanese

STAFF

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Federal Reporting Coordinator
Department of Children and Families

Daniel Yale
Executive Coordinator
New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and
Neglect
Department of Children and Families